

Statewide Benefits of Statewide Web Site Platform Client, Advocate & Program Site Portals

Benefits to Low- and Moderate-Income People around the State

- Easy access to well-organized, comprehensive, up-to-date referrals to free and/or affordable legal representation, legal education materials, tools for self-representation, and connections to the courts and social service organizations.
- Increased access to full representation as a result of increased private attorney involvement and better supported, more efficient legal aid advocates.

Benefits to Legal Aid and Pro Bono Programs

- Client Portal: Comprehensive, updated system of information for clients and intake, hotline and referral staff. A statewide system makes the distribution of accurate, up-to-date referral information and educational resources to clients and advocates easier and more cost effective while preventing development of duplicative materials.
- Advocate Portal: Password-protected online resource featuring shared knowledge base (training materials, model documents and other practice materials), news, shared training calendar, and member-driven listservs. Access to content from other advocate sites across the country.
- Individual organizational web sites for all programs that do not require a webmaster to maintain and update.
- Participation in a broad state collaboration network of legal aid providers, courts, bar associations, private bar, law schools, and community organizations breaks down divisions between public interest entities.
- Increased participation of private attorney volunteers can lead to increased services as well as increased financial and political support for civil legal aid.
- Benefits to entire national legal services network from technology investments made by individual programs.
- Platform for future best practices and technology innovations, e.g. document assembly, webcasting, etc.
- Usage reports are a powerful source of state statistics on need. They provide powerful input on need and access issues, allowing programs to shape outreach and content development.
- Potential for subsidies from statewide fundraising and earned income strategies.

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Benefits to Individual Volunteer Lawyers

- Lowered barriers to volunteer participation due to access to training and support, including shared knowledge base, training, experts and mentors, and model documents.
- Connects volunteers to virtual communities of like-minded public interest lawyers, reducing isolation and promoting retention of volunteers.
- Increased involvement and good will in the community and with nonprofit legal organizations.

Benefits to Individual Legal Aid Advocates

- Increased efficiency through access to state and nationally integrated information system with tools to assist clients, including library, news, calendar, and e-mail updates on important issues.
- Access to shared knowledge base, training, experts and mentors, and model documents increases the quality of service.
- Increased morale from being able to reach more clients with better referral and reliable, up-to-date legal education materials.

Benefits to Courts and Justice System

- Participation in network with legal aid, pro bono groups, law schools, and bar associations in development of statewide systems of support for pro se clients, with anticipation of structuring cost-effective, integrated access point for litigants.
- Better informed litigants, resulting in more efficient and smoother court operations, with savings throughout.
- Greater visibility for courts, resulting in greater public trust and confidence.
- Availability of cost-effective, court-branded section of statewide site for distribution of court content.

Benefits to Law Firms

- Aggregated information regarding pro bono opportunities, trainings, and resources saves significant costs relating to management of pro bono programs.
- Lowered barriers to pro bono participation.
- Better-supported and more efficient pro bono attorneys.
- Increased participation results in increased good will toward firms both in the community and within nonprofit legal sector.

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Benefits to Funders and State Access to Justice Bodies

- The platform creates a comprehensive map of referral information, client legal education and self-help information, and advocate support materials. Allows funders to identify “gap areas” in service and materials and to reduce unnecessary duplication.
- Usage reports are a powerful source of state statistics on need.
- The platform represents a high-impact, sustainable technology investment. Investments by funders are pooled and leveraged across states and substantive areas.
- Because of its collaborative nature, the project is attractive to diverse pool of funders.
- Concrete project for broad collaborations among grantees within and across areas.